

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 578

November 16, 1995, 3:52 p.m.
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SECOND CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS (2nd Bill)/Social Security

SUBJECT: Second Continuing Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1996 . . . H.J. Res. 122. Domenici motion to table the Hollings amendment No. 3056.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 53-46

SYNOPSIS: As introduced, H.J. Res. 122, the Second Continuing Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1996 (the President vetoed an earlier second continuing appropriations bill; see vote No. 567), will provide limited funding through December 5, 1995 for Federal programs that have not yet had fiscal year (FY) 1996 appropriations enacted for them. The rate of appropriations will be the lowest of the current rate or the Senate- or House-passed rate. Programs and activities terminated or significantly reduced will be maintained at a rate not to exceed 60 percent of the current rate. Rates will be adjustable further to prevent reductions in force. Section 301 will commit the President and the Congress to achieving a unified balanced budget by 2002, as scored by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

The Hollings amendment would add the following, "Notwithstanding any other provision of this Joint Resolution, the seven year balance budget resolution passed by the Congress to the President shall not include the use of Social Security Trust Funds to reflect a balanced budget."

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Domenici moved to table the Hollings amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

We have discussed the rationale behind unified budgeting at length in the past, and we have discussed the history of the Social Security system in particular and trust funds in general as well. Privately, every Senator understands that the way to judge whether the Federal Government is in balance is by noting whether the Government spends more in a year than it collects in revenue. The whole budget needs to be in balance, not just bits and pieces. Nevertheless, Democrats have this year found it shocking that the

(See other side)

YEAS (53)		NAYS (46)		NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (53 or 100%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (46 or 100%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms	Akaka	Inouye		
Ashcroft	Hutchison	Baucus	Johnston		
Bennett	Inhofe	Biden	Kennedy		
Bond	Jeffords	Bingaman	Kerrey		
Brown	Kassebaum	Boxer	Kerry		
Burns	Kempthorne	Bradley	Kohl		
Campbell	Kyl	Breaux	Lautenberg		
Chafee	Lott	Bryan	Leahy		
Coats	Lugar	Bumpers	Levin		
Cochran	Mack	Byrd	Lieberman		
Cohen	McCain	Conrad	Mikulski		
Coverdell	McConnell	Daschle	Moseley-Braun		
Craig	Murkowski	Dodd	Moynihan		
D'Amato	Nickles	Dorgan	Murray		
DeWine	Pressler	Exon	Nunn		
Dole	Roth	Feingold	Pell		
Domenici	Santorum	Feinstein	Pryor		
Faircloth	Shelby	Ford	Reid		
Frist	Simpson	Glenn	Robb		
Gorton	Smith	Graham	Rockefeller		
Gramm	Snowe	Harkin	Sarbanes		
Grams	Specter	Heflin	Simon		
Grassley	Stevens	Hollings	Wellstone		
Gregg	Thomas				
Hatch	Thompson				
Hatfield	Thurmond				
	Warner				

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

Republican balanced budget is of course a unified budget. They never found this fact shocking in prior years, when they passed their unbalanced budgets using unified accounting, nor have they found it shocking this year when they have discussed Democratic alternative budgets that used unified accounting. For instance, in 1993 when Democrats passed the largest tax hike in history, Democratic Senator after Democratic Senator stood on the floor and bragged that President Clinton and they had come up with a plan for running deficits of "only" \$200 billion for the next several years, after which they were expected to grow exponentially. Not one word was whispered by those Democrats that their \$200 billion deficits were based on unified budget accounting that used Social Security surpluses. Perhaps if our Democratic colleagues were sincere in their new-found belief that the Government should not consider all revenue and all spending when determining if its budget is in balance they would sign a pledge saying they would never again vote for a Democratic budget that used unified budget accounting. No one should hold their breath on that score. The strong appearance is that this amendment is more about politics and partisanship than it is about principle. We will of course vote to table it.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

This amendment is very simple. The current law says that Social Security funds may not be used in budget calculations. Our colleagues protest that Republicans and Democrats alike have ignored that requirement, and they are correct, but we do not see this fact as in any way mitigating. The United States is \$5 trillion in debt, with \$3.5 trillion of that amount held by private parties and other governments and \$1.5 trillion of that amount held by the Federal Government itself. The reason why the Federal Government owes money to itself is that it borrows money from Federal trust funds that have surplus revenues and then spends that money. The largest fund that the Government is in debt to is the Social Security trust fund. In the early 1980s, the Social Security tax was increased in order to generate surpluses so that there would be enough money to pay for "baby boomer" retirements. Each year since then, every penny of those surpluses has been borrowed by the Federal Government and spent. A few years ago a Hollings amendment was enacted to stop those excess funds from being spent. Each year in budget calculations that amendment is ignored. If we do not stop ignoring that amendment, when baby boomers start to retire all there will be to repay them will be a big stack of Federal IOUs. The tax base will not be big enough to pay for their retirement with higher taxes. Therefore, unless we fix this problem now, we will not be able to fix it in the future. We hear so much about the need to make the hard decisions that are necessary, but the truth is that we still have not seen either party come up with the type of balanced budget plan, including tax increases, that are going to be necessary to save this country from bankruptcy. We do not need a gimmick budget--we need an honest budget that does not rely on Social Security surpluses to achieve balance. We urge our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make courageous votes in favor of this amendment.